

Mirage by DangerRollins

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Summary:

Brielle meets Jonathan and in hopes of developing a friendship with him,Invites him to her house. She soon discovers that by involving herself with him,She's getting more than she bargained for.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Hi! So this is my new stranger things fanfiction! I hope you guys enjoy it a lot! This is my first time actually writing a book on this site so I hope I'm able to publish all the chapters correctly lol. Enjoy!

Brielle

"Do you think the snow will lighten up before the weekend?" Sabrina asked me before letting out a small cough. I giggled at her discomfort. She hated cold weather more than anything, And I couldn't see how. Cold weather is what I live for! The snow is always so beautiful, The wind always brushes your face so gently, And getting to cuddle up under a warm blanket with a book and a bit of hot chocolate will always be more fun than running along some litter filled beach, At least in my opinion.

"Not a chance." I smirked. She groaned before shoving her gloved hands into her coat pocket before looking at me. "You're going to freeze to death with only that little sweater on." She muttered. "I'll die happily then." I shrug.

We continue walking in silence, The only sounds heard being the sound of our slow footsteps and harsh breathing. We still have ten minutes to get to school before we're late, But we'll be there in five. I sigh a little, Wishing I could just go back home and get under my covers and watch cartoons. Although childish, It's my favorite pastime, Other than reading of course. There isn't anything as peaceful as watching Silly kids shows on a snow filled day, in the comfort of your own room.

It's only Wednesday, So I'll just have to wait three more days before I can wake up and spend my day doing that. I don't hate school though, So I guess it's alright. I like learning new things. It's interesting to know that there are things that exist that I don't know

about. Very important things. I find it intriguing that although I've been alive for seventeen years,I don't know even just two percent of the information that the world holds. My parents have been alive for forty-five and forty-three years,And they don't know even three percent. Nobody will ever know one hundred percent. No one. Absolutely fascinating if you ask me.

"Mr. Kennedy gave me an A on my science project,Did I tell you?" Sabrina boasted,Making me turn my attention to her. I grinned,Knowing she'd worked very hard on her project,And she had every right to be proud. "I beat Tommy Smith for first place in the little contest Mr. Kennedy had going on,And he was absolutely pissed! Guess I tested his masculinity." She smirked. "Congratulations!" I cheer. "What's your prize?" I ask curiously. "Oh just a book." She sighs. "It's an older book. I think it's called...Bridge to Terabithia." I gasp in excitement. "Oh it's not that old,Really. It was written in '77 and it's very interesting." I tell her. "I read it last year,I think. I can't believe you haven't heard of it."

"Oh,You know I don't read very much." She waves me off,Looking a bit down. I send her a small smile,Knowing how she struggles with dyslexia. "Practice makes perfect,And when you find the right book it isn't like being obligated to study or anything...It's pleasant. You never wanna stop reading. You get engulfed in the world that you're reading about." I explain. She stays silent,So trying to make her feel better,I continue to talk. "You know...I've offered to help you. I love to read,You know that. Helping you would be no problem for me."

"Yeah,Well,It's a problem for me. I haven't read in front of anyone but my parents in my entire life,And even they laughed and picked at me." She grumbles. I feel my facial features soften as I look at her. "They were wrong to do that. It's nothing to laugh about,Really. Lot's of people struggle with reading. I wouldn't laugh at you. I've been your best friend since elementary school. You've seen me do plenty of embarrassing things,And you never laughed at me." I tell her,Trying to get her to think positive.

"Yes,I have,Plenty of times." She chuckles. "I know you wouldn't laugh...It's just,I like to avoid it. Gives me major headaches." She explains. "You can't avoid it forever. It isn't like math. This is a skill you'll actually need to use every day of your life...Look,I won't push

because I know how you feel about this,But one day you'll have to let me help you. Deal?" I ask. She sighs before sending me a small smile. "Deal."

While everyone else piled into the cafeteria to eat lunch,I stayed behind and pretended to be searching for something in my locker. Once I noticed that nobody was in sight,I dashed towards the stairs and started to walk up them as quickly as I could. When I made it to the very top,I jogged towards the end of the hallway,Where the library is. I usually always come here during lunch,Because I don't eat the school food anyways,And I don't like to be in the large crowd of people,But two weeks ago it was announced that every student had to report to the lunch room when it was time,Because too many students had been caught making out behind the gym or trying to skip the second half of the school day during this time. I tried for three days to follow the rules and go to the lunch room,But it's just too tightly packed in there for me to be able to stand it. So,I sneak in here every day. The librarian allows it since she knows me so well,But she's usually not in here during lunch anyways.

I slow my pace as I make it into the library without being seen once again. Looking around quickly,I find that I'm alone,as usual,So I place my lunch bag on a nearby table and then look at my watch. Lunch lasts for forty-five minutes,So I have plenty of time to eat my sandwich. Right now,I'm more concerned about finding a new book to read.

Although I know it's probably impossible,It seems like I've read every book the library has to offer. Every book I pick up seems to be one I've already read at least three times. Maybe it isn't impossible,though. The school library isn't the largest after all,And the librarian told me that there's only a total of three hundred books here. Seems like a lot to some people,But not to me.

I've been trying since I started high school to get a bigger library made. This is a large school with a lot of unoccupied space. Extending the library would be no problem. Well...If we had the money to spare. Nobody cares near as much about books as they do about sports,Though,So any money the school gets goes towards the

football or basketball team, Or new uniforms for the cheerleaders.

I run my fingers along each book as I scan through the titles, Trying to hurriedly find anything that I haven't read before. Not even two minutes into looking, I'm distracted by an odd sound. I quickly turn around to scan the room again, And I don't see anyone. I'm not crazy though. I heard something shuffling and what sounded like the click of a camera.

"Hello?" I call out quietly, Not sure if I want to be heard. I tip toe towards the back of the library as quietly as I can, Peeking down each aisle as I do, Trying to see if someone is there. "Come out, Please." I call again, Now curious as to who was lurking here.

It doesn't take me long to figure it out. When I pass the very last aisle of books, I see a boy with brown hair and brown eyes sitting on the ground, Breathing quickly, And staring right up at me. I raise my eyebrows as he scrambles to get up.

"U-Um, I'm-I ugh-" He mumbles some nonsense and I stare at him, Knowing exactly who he is. "Jonathan?" I ask. He looks shocked that I know his name, But I don't know why. Since last year when his brother went missing and then was found, Everybody knows his name.

"Um...Hi." He mumbles, Walking closer to me. He's quite tall so he towers over me, Causing me to have to look up at him. I back away slightly, Feeling uncomfortable but still trying to stand my ground. If he tries something, He has to know that I won't be scared. Although I don't think my body language is saying that. It's saying quite the opposite, Actually, Because he comments on it.

"I-I didn't mean to frighten you. I'm sorry, I-I just was in here and you came in and-" My attention is directed towards the camera in his left hand and the photo in his right even as he continues to speak. I cut him off, Pointing at the picture. "What's that?" I ask. "Did you take a picture of me?"

"N-No. Well I mean yes, But I didn't-I didn't do it because I'm a creep, I promise!" He defends himself. "I like to take pictures...A lot." He goes on, Realizing I'm letting him explain himself. "It keeps me busy and I

like capturing random,Beautiful moments." He says as he hands me the picture. I look at it and furrow my brow. It's only a picture of me a few moments ago,Looking for a book. "I wouldn't call this beautiful." I mumble,Noticing the concentrated expression on my face. "I think I look quite...Weird." I shrug.

"I don't." He grins. "Ugh,I can rip it up if you'd like. I'm sorry,I didn't mean to be so...Well weird." He chuckles slightly as he uses the same word that I did moments ago. "This isn't the first time my camera has gotten me into trouble." He mutters.

"It's innocent enough." I say,Glancing at the photo a final time before handing it to him. "Keep it if you'd like." I smile. "Thank you." He smiles back. "Um...So what are you doing here?" He asks. I shrug before turning away from him and walking back to the front of the library where my food is. He follows,As expected,So I begin talking. "I've always come up to the library to read during lunch. I don't like being near so many other people. The noise gives me headaches and I can only be around people for so long before I start to become anxious...What about you?" I ask.

"Well I don't have many friends so...I just like to come up here whenever I get the chance. Get away from people,You know." He shrugs. "Although I've only been doing it for a week. I usually just hide out in the bathroom or a closet or something." He quickly adds.

"What brought on the sudden change?" I ask.

"Well the library smells better." He mumbles. I let out a small giggle,Which I can tell shocks him,And he chuckles too. He clears his throat and looks around after I sit down in front of my bag. I look up at him,Keeping silent,And he starts to speak. "Well...I'm sorry if I've bothered you. Now that I know this is kind of your quiet place,I'll find somewhere else to go during lunch." He mumbles,Putting his hands behind his back and crossing one leg over the other,Trying to make himself small.

"Oh,No,Please stay." I smile. He doesn't seem loud or obnoxious or rude like most other people at this school. "It isn't like I own the library,And I guess I don't mind the company." I shrug. "Plus,I'd feel guilty knowing I forced you back into a smelly bathroom." I giggle.

He laughs and nods a little before awkwardly taking a seat in front of me. He taps his fingers against the table a couple times before glancing at me and then diverting his eyes towards the ground. I smile a little, Noticing how awkward and shy he is, And I can relate. While I do have my moments, I usually am quite shy myself. Sometimes I say too much and sometimes I refuse to speak. I'm just odd like that, I guess.

"You don't have anything to eat?" I ask. He shakes his head. "Ugh, No I usually don't bring anything." He answers me. I quickly take a bottle of water and one of my two sandwiches out of my lunch bag and push it towards him. He shakes his head quickly as he looks at the food. "Oh, No no. I couldn't eat your food. You'll be hungry for the rest of the day."

"No I won't." I grin as I take out my other sandwich. "I always pack two."

"Really?" He chuckles. "Why?" He asks before slowly taking the sandwich out of the ziplock bag and taking a bite. "When I was fourteen I was walking to school and I saw a man out. It was winter and he was freezing. I saw him ask a man if he had any spare change so that he could grab a snack since he hadn't eaten in two days, And the man said no and walked on by. So, I gave him my food to eat. I was hungry for the entire day though..." I laugh a little. "So I've been packing two sandwiches ever since then."

"That's nice." He smiles. "Do you still see the man every day or something?" He asks. I shake my head. "I haven't seen that man since that day, Actually. I just figured that if I ever did see that man, Or any other man or woman who needed something to eat, I'd be prepared. Sometimes I give the extra sandwich to a friend, As you can see."

"Friend?" He asks.

"Well, If you want to be."

"Yeah..." He smiles.

"Nice... So, Photography. Is that your thing?" I ask curiously.

"Yeah...I love taking pictures of people,Especially when they're caught in the moment. I think pictures are nicer if the person I'm taking a photo of doesn't expect it." He explains. "Why?" I ask. He shrugs. "It's natural. Truthful. Posing for a picture is one thing,But what really brings the photo to life is when it's an honest picture. One I take out of instinct because the moment is too beautiful not to capture. I find that beauty in simple things,Mostly." He smiles,Clearly very passionate about his photos.

"That's a really nice way of explaining it." I state positively. "I've never thought of photos like that. Never paid them much attention,But I have always thought it was interesting what certain people could do with a camera and what certain people couldn't. The fact that you can create and see the art of such a simple picture,Like the one you took of me,Is great."

"T-Thanks." He stutters,Telling me he isn't used to such compliments. "I think maybe I should give my photography a break,though." He chuckles nervously. "I've been caught taking pictures of people several times. I'm lucky nobody has called the police on me or something." "Never stop." I shake my head. "You have talent. As long as you aren't being perverted..." I giggle. "I think you should never stop."

"Thanks." He says,Sounding more sure now. "So,What are you into?"

I swallow the bite of my sandwich that I'd just taken before answering his question. "What am I not into? I'm passionate about a lot of things...Like learning different languages. So far I only know four,But I'd like to learn a lot more than that."

"Only four?" He asks. "Sounds like a lot to me. I only know one."

"There are hundreds of languages used in the world." I shrug. "Knowing four is more than most people,But If I wanna be able to communicate with all kinds of different people,I'll need to know more than that."

"Which ones do you know,Aside from English?"

"Spanish,Sign language,And Japanese." I smile proudly. I started

learning Spanish when I was twelve. When I mastered that,I started learning sign language at age fourteen,Then it was Japanese,Which took me a little longer so I've just recently fully learned that.

He raises his brows and lets out a breathy chuckle. "I was expecting French."

"Don't expect things with me." I joke.

"Well,I won't." He grins. "So what else are you passionate about?"

"Well...I'm currently learning the names and meanings of all the phobias I've ever heard of. I'm also apart of several community service groups. It's weird,But I actually like picking up trash on abandoned roads and things. I donate all the money I can to charities,Help cook during the holidays at the homeless shelter...You know." I mumble shyly. People tend to think I'm a bit odd because I like doing those things,And if they don't think I'm odd then they certainly think I only do it to get recognition. I don't usually care,But I don't want Jonathan to think those things.

He surprises me though,By sending me a small smile and nodding his head,Telling me to go on. I clear my throat and shrug a little,Starting to wonder if I'm giving him the wrong first impression. What if he starts to think I'm weird? "Well I...I like to study psychology. Knowing why people do things is a big deal for me. Knowing body language...Is..." I swallow and quit talking,Becoming too engulfed in my thoughts.

I've been talking to him for only a few minutes,And already I'm probably scaring him away. Nobody my age cares about these things. I should be talking to him about the latest parties or something. He probably thinks I'm so boring.

"Are you okay?" He asks. I blink a few times and then look towards him. His big eyes look right into mine and I sigh a little. "I'm okay." I mutter,Looking down. I stop speaking completely,Now unsure of what I could say to make the conversation less boring.

"Well I don't know anything about psychology,But I can tell that you're upset about something. Just a moment ago you were talking so

quickly, So excitedly about your interests. You were oozing confidence. Now, You don't want to speak... Is it something that I did?" He asks.

"No!" I quickly exclaim. "No... It's just that... I don't want to give you the wrong impression. I'm not very interesting. The things I'm into aren't really the norm for a regular teen around here... I just don't want to bore you half to death."

"I'm not bored at all. I'm quite interested actually. I've never met someone so talented." He comforts me. "Talented?" I ask. "Yes, Talented." He laughs. "You seem to have a lot of knowledge about a lot of things... I call that talent. I'd like to hear more about your interests."

"Well... Well I'd like to hear more about yours as well." I tell him, Now feeling comfortable with him again. "I don't think we have the time, Though. Lunch is over in five minutes." I frown. "Would you want to... Well-" I clear my throat, Wondering what in the world I'm doing. Before I can stop myself, Though, I ask my question. "Would you like to come over? To my house? Tonight? I mean, Well after school." "Sure." He says, Looking shocked. "Ugh- I can um, I can come." "Great." I smile. "I'll write my address on a piece of paper for you. It shouldn't be hard to find. Just a five-minute drive from the school."

"Okay. Ugh, This is awkward." He chuckles. "What's your name?"

I gasp a little. "Oh... I haven't even- Hah, Um. I'm Brielle. Brielle Harris." I smile, Reaching over to shake his hand with a small laugh. He shakes it and sends me a grin before clearing his throat. "Nice talking to you... I'm sorry I kept you from your reading."

"It's okay, I enjoyed your company." I tell him honestly. "I think we'll make great friends." I smile.

2. Chapter 2

Brielle

"Sabrina...Sabrina slow down." I said quietly, Trying to get a word in as I listened to Sabrina talk quickly. I repositioned the phone in between my shoulder and my ear and looked down at the cookbook in my hands, Trying to figure out how to make the casserole I'd planned on making. "I can't understand you while you're talking so fast."

"Well I'm sorry but I'm just so excited!" She practically yells. "You've got a date tonight with a boy. A boy!" She exclaims. "Do you know how long I've been waiting for this? All my life, That's how long! I just can't believe-"

"Now, Where did you get that silly idea?" I ask. "This isn't a date. I invited him over because he was interesting. I wanted to talk to him more. He isn't like most boys are. He's timid, Polite..." I drift off.

"D-A-T-E!"

"I just...I didn't wanna miss out on making a new friend, One that's interesting and intelligent. I don't have a friend like that." I smirk, Knowing she'll scold me. "Oh shut up." She nearly growls. "I'm a wonderful human being and you, Ma'am, Are quite lucky to have me." She says, Sounding quite sure of herself. "Yes I am." I agree.

"Well, What are you going to wear? Is your mom home? Your brother and sister? Is your house clean? Is he gonna be in your room?" She shoots questions out one by one and I try my best to remember each of them so that I can answer them all, But it's hard to do so as I try to focus on making sure the oven is the right temperature before I put my pan in. "Um...Probably that plaid skirt I've got with my black stockings and my black boots along with my white crop top. My siblings are hanging out with their friends, Mom is, As usual, Nowhere to be found. My house is always clean, You know how I am." I laugh a little. "...I'm not sure. I'm making a casserole so I imagine we'll sit in the kitchen or living room to eat. Then we probably will go to my room." I shrug, Although she can't see it.

"You only wear that outfit on special occasions." She states, Ignoring everything else. "You wore it when you came to my birthday party last year, You wore it when you went to the book signing for your favorite book last year, You wear it to almost every family dinner you have, And now, You're wearing it for what is supposedly not a date with Jonathan Byers." I can almost hear the smirk she's wearing. I roll my eyes and move smoothly around my kitchen, Trying to not tangle myself up in the phone line. "It's my favorite outfit. Your point?"

"My point is that this is a date." She says confidently. "What do you two plan to do, Anyway?" She asks. I take a moment to think. "Well...I'm not sure. We had a nice time talking in the library so I invited him over, But we didn't discuss what we'd do." I mumble. "Sabrina, He's going to think I'm boring." I nearly whine. "I could barely hold a conversation with him for forty-five minutes. He'll probably be here a lot longer than that. How will I keep his attention for so long?"

"Don't think about it. Tell me, Did you speak to him easily earlier? When you weren't psyching yourself out, I mean?" She asks, Sounding knowing. "I guess...He was relatively easy to talk to. He seemed a little interested. He listened to my every word, Watched me as I spoke. He didn't interrupt. He seemed genuinely interested in what I had to say, And that made it a lot easier for me to get comfortable and tell him about myself." I explain.

"Well, there you go." She says. "Don't be so self-conscious and you'll be fine. When you talk he listens and vice versa. I'm sure you'll have plenty to talk about. Time will pass without you even knowing it and by the end of the night, You'll hate to see him go. Just you watch."

"I guess, But I still-"

I'm cut off mid sentence by the sound of soft knock on the front door. I run towards the kitchen window, Knowing I'll be able to see who's there from it. I gasp as I notice it's Jonathan, Standing there looking anxious. I glance at the clock and notice that it's already four thirty. I hadn't realized how much time had passed since school got out. "Sabrina, He's here!" I whisper-yell, Backing away from the window. "What do I do?!"

"Um, Open the door?" She questions sarcastically. "I can't! I'm not dressed!" "Even better for him." She laughs. I groan. "I'm dressed but- Not well. Now isn't the time for your dirty humor! HELP ME!" "Calm down." She soothes me. "Just, Make sure he knows you'll open the door eventually and then haul ass upstairs and change. Now hang up the phone so you can do that." She tells me. "Okay...Okay bye!" I Mutter before hanging the phone up. I hurriedly push the pan Into the oven.

Jonathan knocks again, Just as soft as the last time, As if he doesn't want to be heard. I hurriedly run towards the door and crack it open, Just enough to peak my head out. "Hi!" I greet him, Trying to seem normal. "Um, Could you maybe...Wait out here for just two minutes?" I ask. He nods. "Of course." "Thank you." I smile before shutting the door and quickly dashing up the stairs.

I slam the door of my room open before ripping my shirt off and kicking my shoes off. I change into the crop top first and then pull my pants down. I shove my boots on as I see them before I see my skirt, And then I spin around in a circle, Quickly searching for the plaid material. Once I find it I pull it on before picking up my chapstick and putting it on my lips. I glance in the mirror and nearly scream, Realizing how terrible my hair looks, And that I'd managed to forget to put on my stockings. My bare legs, Although smooth looking, Always made me self-conscious, So I tried to cover them up whenever I could. Now, However, I didn't have time because I had to do something with my messy hair, And in record time in order to not seem rude.

I quickly took it out of the ponytail it was in previously and watched the black, Wavy hair fall down my shoulders. I cursed myself for having long hair as I quickly tried to brush it all out, Nearly making myself bald in the process. Once I noticed that it didn't look absolutely terrible, I hurriedly threw my other clothes into the hamper and then ran down the stairs, Almost tripping because my boots had small heels on them. When I was in front of the door again, I cleared my throat and smoothed my hair and outfit down one final time before opening the door. I wore what was probably an unconvincing smile as I stepped aside to let him in. "Sorry, I um- I...Sorry." I said, Too exasperated to come up with a lie. "No worries, I

like being outside." He chuckled. I shut the door behind him and rubbed my already sweaty palms on my skirt before pulling it down as much as I could and then putting my arms behind my back. "Yeah me too,Um,But sorry still. I mean,It's snowing outside for goodness sake." I laugh nervously,Glancing up at him.

"It's Okay,Really." He reassures me. "Ugh...Would you like me to take my shoes off?" He asks. "Oh,No you don't have to unless you want to." I smile as I begin to walk into the kitchen. He follows me,Deciding to leave his shoes on. "Something smells good." He compliments. I feel myself blush a little,Happy that for once my cooking didn't smell-And hopefully didn't look-Repulsive. "Thank you."

"I know it's weird-" He says,Changing the subject. "But I brought my camera...I was hoping I could maybe...We'll I was hoping you wouldn't mind if I just-If I took some pictures of you? When you're just...You know,Doing whatever." "I don't mind." I shrug. "Maybe we should eat first though. I don't want you to be working on a hungry stomach." I giggle. "I made broccoli casserole because...Well it's nearly the only thing I know how to make other than cereal and cheese toast,And well,Those don't go well together...So." "Oh,I love Broccoli casserole." He grins. "Great." I mumble softly,Rubbing my arm as I look away from him. "Great."

"Sorry if my room is a bit...Weird." I say as I open my room door slowly,Hoping nothing is out of place. "I've got a lot of really random stuff in here." I mutter. In the corner is my bed,Way bigger than I actually need,But I love it. Then I've got my desk,Which has my school books on it. Then there's my bookshelf,With a book in every possible crevice. Then there's my closet door. I got lucky enough to get the room with a walk in closet,So I keep all my little 'Projects' in there. I like to make clothes for children whose parents can't afford to buy them any,So I keep my sewing machine in there,Along with all my art books and journals,And even my guitar. I can't play it very well. I got it two years ago and it still looks brand new,Because I rarely touch it. I still have every intention to learn how to play it,But I can't overwhelm myself. Right now I'm focused on expanding my mind and learning a bit about how the world works. Eventually,Though,I'll be ready to learn how to play the instrument.

"Did you write these?" He asks as he looks at the wall that my bed is against. I blush a little, For probably the twelfth time since he got here only an hour ago. "Yeah. I like to keep those quotes around. There's basically one for each of my moods." I let out a breathy laugh. "I like your room." He compliments again. "I can tell that it's just for you. It's very customized."

"Thanks...Take a seat." I offer, Not wanting him to be uncomfortable. He slowly sits down on my bed, And I sit in my desk chair and look at him. He's a very handsome guy. He's got pretty eyes, Clear skin and a nice head of hair. His personality is quite attractive as well. I don't understand why he doesn't have many friends. Feeling brave and wanting to continue with our conversation, I ask him.

"I'm an outsider." He shrugs. "I don't like partying or making others feel bad because of their differences. I rather take pictures of people than interact with them. People don't understand me." He answers, Looking down. "I do." I say, Trying to comfort him. "Well...Not fully, But I understand where you're coming from. People get scared of what they aren't used to."

"Yeah...So what about you? Do you have a lot of friends? A boyfriend?" He asks, Looking into my eyes once again. "No." I shake my head. "No boyfriend and not many friends. People try to talk to me sometimes. Try to get close to me. But I usually don't like to deal with them. I only have one real friend. Maybe you know her. Her name is Sabrina." I smile. "Yeah, I believe I've seen her around school. She's a redhead right?" He asks. I nod. "She seems nice."

"Well she is." I tell him. "You'd like her. Maybe I could introduce her to you one day." "Yeah..." He drifts off. Neither of us says anything for a few moments, And I can't help but curse myself for being so socially awkward. I wish I could easily hold conversations with people, Like Sabrina and practically everyone else can, But I've always struggled with speaking to- And connecting to- Other people.

"Can I maybe...Ask you something?" He asks. I nod eagerly, Glad that he found something else to say, Because I sure couldn't. "Did you just invite me over here because...Because of my brother?" He asks, Rubbing nervously at his knee. I tilt my head. "Your brother?" I mutter. "Oh! Your brother!" I exclaim, Now knowing why he'd think

that. "Yeah it's just...I don't associate with many people,But sometimes people do try to get to know me,But not really...For me. They do it because they want to know more about my brother,You know,How he's doing,Where he went to,What his experience was like." He mutters sadly. I send him a sad look,Knowing it must be awful to have people trying to get to know him just because they want to be nosy.

"I am quite a curious person." I say honestly. "But,I didn't invite you over because I was thinking of your brother." "Okay." He smiles. "I'm glad. Because I like you." He admits. "I-I mean. I like you. As in,You know,You're nice. Nice." He stutters.

"I like you too." I grin. "Oh,I should show you-" I mutter,Standing up abruptly. I hurriedly walk to my closet and swing the door open before going inside. "Come in here!" I shout so that he can hear me.

I hear him walk into the closet seconds later and I smile before pointing at my box of comic books. "I'm not sure if you're into this kind of thing,But I certainly am." I giggle,Hoping he doesn't think I'm weird. "I just like to read them because it's interesting to think that there could be a universe out there,Different than ours,Where superheroes and villains exist. Well...They do exist in our universe just,Not like...This." I ramble.

"They do?" He asks,Encouraging me to go on. "Oh,Well not really. Just...Well some people take on the hero role,You know,Helping other people out and being the best person they can be and all that. Others ruin things for other people,Like to cause chaos. Nobody has any super powers but,Heros and villains exist,I guess." I start mumbling near the end. As usual,I'm making a fool of myself. "Sorry for my blathering."

"I like to hear you talk about things that interest you." He says,Looking directly into my eyes. I don't say anything,Too focused on how close he is to me. My heart starts to beat faster as I see his eyes momentarily flicker down to my lips,And then come back up.

I don't know why,But I move my body just a little bit closer to his,And he does the same. There's only about an inch between us,And I briefly wonder how this happened. I invited him over with only

intentions of getting to know him a little better,And to have a new friend. I wasn't expecting for us to kiss,Which is what's going to happen if I just move a little closer...

"I-Is this okay?" He asks before taking a step back. I don't answer him,Instead I take another step forward and slowly wrap my arms around his neck,Having to stand on my tippy toes just to do so. I move my head forward and press my lips softly on his,My curiosity getting the best of me. I've never kissed a boy before. Boys haven't ever taken an interest in me,Not that I blame them. My personality is boring and my looks are mediocre at best. Nothing about me really stands out.

He carefully touches my cheek as he moves his lips with mine in a slow and steady kiss. His lips are rough but soft,And I find myself enjoying the kiss much more than I thought I would. It isn't perfect because I'm inexperienced and I have a feeling that he is too,But it's very enjoyable for me.

He pulls me closer and I tighten my grip on his neck,But I pull away slowly after realizing that I need oxygen. I slowly remove my grip on his neck and stand flat on my feet again. I wipe at my mouth a little while looking down,Not knowing what to say now. I hope he enjoyed that as much as I did,But a little part of me thinks he didn't. I try to push that negative voice out of my head, though because that voice is the one that keeps me from enjoying my life. That voice is the voice that holds me back.

"Sorry." He whispers. "No,It's fine!" I breathe. "Um,I-"

I'm cut off by the sound of a loud bang downstairs. I furrow my brow and look up at him before walking out of my closet slowly. He follows closely behind me,And we find ourselves walking out of my room and down the stairs. My curiosity and fright is quickly replaced with annoyance and embarrassment as soon as we reach the bottom of the stairs,And I see my mom pulling off her clothes while wasting beer all over the carpet. "Mom!" I call,Trying to warn her that we have a guest. She looks over at us and then goes back to doing what she's doing,Clearly not caring.

"This your boyfriend?" She asks after finally being able to remove her

shirt. "Aren't you the Byers boy? Not the one that went missing...The other one-The ugh,The weird one?" She slurs. "Mom!" I squeak out in embarrassment.

"It's okay." He whispers to me. "Maybe I should go?"

"Yeah. Yeah,I'm sorry." I mumble as I lead him towards the door,Sending a glare to my mom as I walk past her. "I'm so sorry." I tell him honestly. "Don't be,It's okay." He smiles. "I'll see you at school,Okay?"

"Okay." I say quietly before closing the door. I turn back to face my mother and shake my head at her. "You always ruin everything" I mumble softly as I look at her. She takes a seat on the couch and rubs at her temples. "I'm sorry." She mutters. "You always say that." I roll my eyes. "I always mean it." She tells me before throwing her legs up on the couch and turning on her side. "I need a nap." She says,Shutting her eyes.

"So that's it? We don't get to talk about it? You embarrassed me in front of Jonathan and we don't get to talk about it?" I ask,Growing angrier. "Why do you always have to do this?! Every time I have even the tiniest chance of making a new friend,Or being happy,You've just got to ruin it!" I shout.

"Watch your tone." She warns me. "I said I was sorry,Now let's move on." "We can't move on until you stop being a drunk." I mumble as I turn around. "What?" I hear her nearly growl. Already regretting what I said,I try to keep walking. I just want to go to my room and go to sleep,But when she grabs my arm and spins me around to face her,I know that's not going to happen. "I am not a drunk!" She yells defensively. "What do you call this,Then?" I ask,Pointing to the beer cans that sit all over the place. "I don't drink. Blake doesn't drink. Byrd doesn't drink. These are all yours! And look how many there are." "I just haven't cleaned up in a while-" "These are all from today." I cut her off. "You're drunk right now. You can barely stand."

"I-I-"

"You need to get help,Mom." I sigh. "You have three kids that need you. Why do you choose booze over us? What's wrong with us?" I

question, Feeling frustrated tears pricking at my eyes. It's the question I always asked myself, But I never asked her until now. I always wondered how she could think that a simple drink was more important than the children she birthed. She's supposed to be there for us. She's supposed to love and take care of us, But she doesn't. Mostly because when we need her to come to our school on parent day, Or to chaperone a dance, Or to have a parent conference, Or to see a play or a game, She's too hungover. Because two years ago, When Blake broke his foot, She couldn't take him to the hospital because she was under the influence. Because when I graduated middle school, She couldn't attend the ceremony, Because she was too busy getting drunk with some of her 'Friends'. She can never choose us over her alcohol and I will never, Ever, Understand why.

"Don't try to make me feel guilty!" She cries. "You don't KNOW what its like! You don't know what it feels like to... To miss someone so much that you feel absolutely empty unless you have alcohol in you to fill the space." She whimpers. I sigh. "I miss dad too-" "Shut up!" She yells. "You were only a kid when he died, You barely knew him, That's why- That's why you don't, You don't feel the kind of pain that I do!" She slurs. "He was my- My everything. Everything. To me." She hiccups before lying down again. I run to the kitchen and grab the small trash bin under the sink and take it into the living room, Knowing she'll probably get sick soon. "Just- Get out of my face, Please." She whispers. "No problem." I spat before turning on my heel to walk upstairs.

Of all the days she could've chosen to actually come home, She just had to pick today. I was sure she wouldn't come here, But I guess I was wrong. I don't know how I'll face Jonathan tomorrow. Not only did we share a spontaneous kiss, But he also saw my mom half naked and drunk. He'll probably avoid me from now on, And it's all mom's fault!

Who knows though. Maybe he won't think I'm a total creep.